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ABSTRACT

This document presents the second in a series of six interrelated guides, the Schools in an Aging Society series, designed to promote education for, with, and about older adults. This guide develops a rationale for intergenerational programs that address the educational and social needs of younger and older persons. It contends that older adults can offer their expertise and experiences to enrich educational programs, as well as satisfy their own needs for meaningful social roles, while younger persons can benefit from older persons who serve as positive role models and mentors. This guide suggests seven intergenerational models for classroom teachers: (1) Elders as Presenters; (2) Oral History Project; (3) Community History Project; (4) Multicultural and Age Awareness; (5) Intergenerational Discussion Groups; (6) Life Writing; and (7) Food and Culture. Practical suggestions are given for planning intergenerational programs, facilitating intergenerational discussions, and conducting oral history interviews. (NB)

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ELDERS AS RESOURCES

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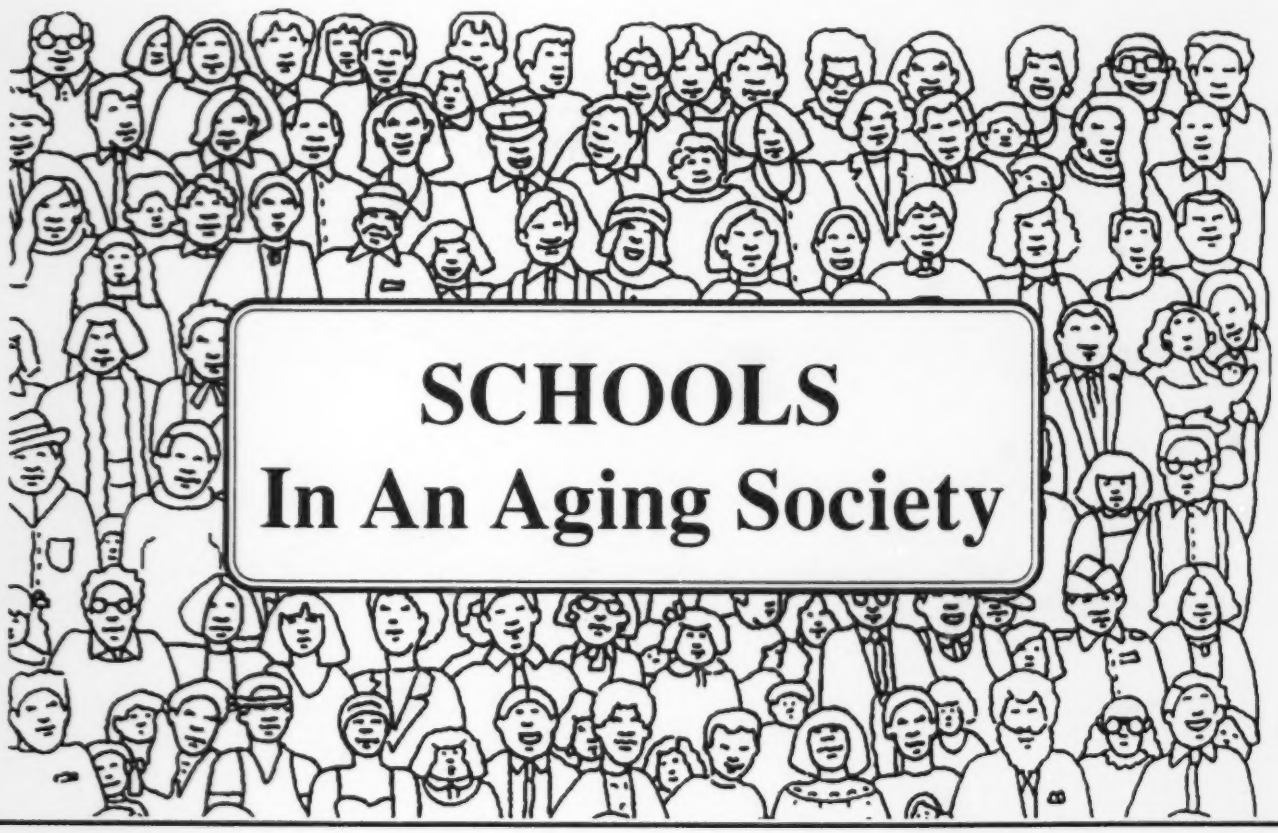

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Schools In An Aging Society:
ELDERS AS RESOURCES

Printed Courtesy of ITT Hartford Insurance Group

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PREFACE

Young people need to be aware of the social, political and economic consequences of an aging society. Schools can prepare students with the necessary knowledge, skills and values to participate in this changing world. The intent of the series *Schools in an Aging Society* is to promote education for, with and about older adults. The series consists of six interrelated guides.

Strengthening the School-Community Connection shows how schools can be more responsive to the larger community. It is especially beneficial in areas where an increasing proportion of residents are older and have no school-age children. The guide is designed for school administrators, volunteer coordinators, staff developers and members of local boards of education who seek creative uses of community resources and want to increase intergenerational cooperation. It describes in detail AGES (Advancing Generations' Education through the Schools), a planning model that promotes awareness of older adults through staff development, intergenerational exchange projects, curricular activities, curriculums on aging, and classroom and extracurricular activities. Eight steps are followed in designing an AGES program at either a systemwide or individual school level. Issues such as recruitment, follow-up and continuity of projects are addressed. The program benefits students, teachers and older residents with minimal resource commitments from any one group.

As the fastest-growing segment of society, older adults can be valuable resources for schools. *Elders as Resources*, the second guide in the series, develops a rationale for intergenerational programs that address the educational and social needs of younger and older persons. Older adults can offer their expertise and experiences to enrich educational programs, as well as satisfy their own needs for meaningful social roles. Younger persons benefit from older persons who serve as positive role models and mentors. *Elders as Resources* suggests seven intergenerational models for classroom teachers. Practical suggestions are given for planning intergenerational programs, facilitating intergenerational discussions and conducting oral history interviews.

The challenges for our society require educators to confront stereotypic images of older adults and to present an accurate and balanced view of aging. Three *Classroom Activities* guides in this series consist of lesson plans for secondary teachers of health and home economics, language arts, and social studies. The suggested activities are designed to address existing curricular objectives and require minimal preparation time. Although learning activities are separated by discipline, teachers are encouraged to use information in other content areas. Since aging is an interdisciplinary subject, many activities would be appropriate in several subjects as well as for promoting interdisciplinary instruction. The activities are intended to help students develop healthy attitudes toward their own aging, realize the lifelong importance of decisions they make as young adults, and understand the interdependence of all age groups.

Finally, a *Guide for Pupil Personnel Specialists* provides age-related information on the changing family and workplace. It is appropriate for school counselors, psychologists and social workers. Changes in family structure, such as fewer children and more older persons, mean that students have different family experiences and needs than young people of past generations. An increasing number of young people are

(continued)

in homes where primary care is provided to their grandparents. Also, a growing number of children are under the primary care of their grandparents. Additionally, career opportunities and the workplace are affected by the aging society. School counselors are in a unique position to help young people by working with students individually, in the classroom, with families, and through school-community programs.

Schools and community organizations can act as catalysts for promoting a supportive social and economic environment for successful aging. The benefits extend to future generations of older people.

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Laura Donorfio, project assistant, contributed in countless ways to the development of these materials, including researching topics, typing, reviewing, editing and organizing material.

David Shuldiner, humanities program coordinator for the Connecticut State Department on Aging, was the lead author of the guide *Elders as Resources*. He worked closely with educators and social service agencies to provide intergenerational program recommendations.

Mark A. Edinberg, originator of AGES (Advancing Generations' Education through Schools), was the lead author of *Strengthening the School-Community Connection*. He worked closely with schools that have implemented the AGES planning model.

The ideas found in the discipline guides of *Schools in an Aging Society* come from many individuals whose contributions may not be acknowledged here, but whose efforts are greatly appreciated. Numerous ideas were generated from outstanding educators participating in Connecticut's Institute for Teaching and Learning over the past four years. The following educators served in advisory capacities and provided background information, classroom suggestions and organizational ideas for the *Classroom Activities* guides.

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ELDERS AS RESOURCES

Elders as Resources programs are designed to encourage the active cooperation of older adults and young students in educational experiences. By exchanging viewpoints and working together in Elders as Resources programs, older and younger people can learn to appreciate the concerns – and the contributions – that they offer to each other.

Appreciating Age and Cultural Diversity

One of the most important goals of education is to instill a sense of appreciation for the diversity of the human experience. This includes the different ways people from varying cultural backgrounds view the world. Appreciation of human diversity also includes understanding the perspectives of people born at different times in different historical periods.

In a rapidly changing world, each succeeding generation shares experiences as different from other generations as there are differences among cultures. By introducing members of the older generation into the classroom, teachers add another perspective to cultural diversity.

Without adding units or topics, teachers can expose their students to the subject of aging by having older and younger people working together in learning activities. When the young interact with older persons, there is increased understanding of aging, and the contributions and perspectives of older men and women are more appreciated.

In many cultures, family and community members traditionally looked to older persons for guidance. Older persons enjoyed respect for their years of living, working and experiencing life's changes. But in a complex world that is changing rapidly, older people are less valued for their years of accumulated knowledge. As technology advances, a transfer of knowledge often is initiated by younger persons. Without opportunities for meaningful exchanges of ideas, young people may view older people as old-fashioned, behind the times or a hindrance to progress. Older people may view younger people as self-important or shallow.

In most families there is regular intergenerational contact, whether family members live in the same household or in separate towns. However, even if they see each other often, communication may be limited in scope. For example, although grandparents and grandchildren may be in daily contact, they may not significantly understand each other, or exchange thoughts and feelings about past and present events.

In some cases, family arrangements make frequent contact difficult or impossible. Older and younger generations become separated when families relocate for jobs or through divorce. Older family members may move to another region after retirement. Immigrant families with limited means may leave younger or older family members in their country of origin. As a result, many young people are deprived of regular contact with older persons and do not benefit from the experiences their elders might share with them about the world in which they live.

Like families, schools may have established relationships with the surrounding community, but teachers may know little about the community and the resources it offers. Among those resources are older men and women who are active in various community groups, such as local senior centers and volunteer organizations. Older residents have valuable information and perspectives to share when schools provide intergenerational educational opportunities.

By promoting intergenerational education, schools respond to the needs of the larger community and strengthen classroom instruction. Elders as Resources programs described in this guide are designed to bring schools and communities together and allow younger and older persons to learn from each other.

PROGRAM BENEFITS

Elders as Resources programs must meet the needs of all participants in order to be optimally successful. Some of the benefits for students, older adults and educators are described in this section.

Benefits to Students

Elders as Resources programs address many of the social, psychological and cognitive needs of students.

Realistic portrayal of older adults. The programs help young students to realize that older men and women – just like themselves – come from different backgrounds and have different personalities. By providing direct experiences with older adults, Elders as Resources programs avoid stereotypes which glamorize or denigrate old age.

Development of positive attitudes about one's own aging. The program helps students to develop healthy attitudes toward their own aging and realize the lifelong importance of decisions they will make as young adults. Direct experiences with older adults in controlled settings are more effective in changing attitudes than factual information or discussions about aging.

Evaluation of lifelong decisions. The quality of life young people will experience when they grow old will be influenced by their decisions as young adults. Opportunities exist during intergenerational Elders as Resources projects for students to consider life choices that older persons made during young adulthood. By extension, teachers can encourage students to evaluate their own decisions related to diet, exercise, education and personal relationships which will affect them in later life.

Experience working with older people. Students today live in a society with a much higher percentage of older adults and will interact with older adults more than any previous generation. Intergenerational programs offer experience working and communicating with older people. This experience and communication can be transferred to future family and work situations involving older adults.

Transmission of knowledge and values. Older adults interacting in the classroom can help younger students with subjects they are studying and can use their unique backgrounds or expertise to encourage students to learn. For example, an older person might speak from experience about historical events and provide young students with a perspective not found in books. A composition assignment could be especially meaningful if based on the recorded life story of an older person. A program on multicultural awareness would be enhanced by presentations from older members of different ethnic groups.

Benefits to Elders

Older adults must realize personal benefits from their involvement in Elders as Resources programs in order to maintain their interest and to promote intergenerational involvement among their peers.

Meaningful roles. Older persons will discover benefits of their own as they participate in Elders as Resources programs. While collaborating with students on educational projects, older persons can provide a valuable service as consultants and mentors for younger students. By offering their knowledge and experience, older persons can satisfy their own needs to be useful and make meaningful contributions to their communities, including children and schools.

Social and personal rewards. Older adults will find social and personal rewards. Young and old people may realize that they both face issues of ageism. Each group finds itself isolated and misunderstood at times. Working together overcomes social isolation among different age groups, isolation that can lead to misunderstanding.

Improved self-image. As students increasingly understand older men and women as individuals, older people will find their own sense of worth improved. Since a person's self-concept often is a reflection of the views of other people, the self-images of older participants are enhanced through the supportive social and educational experience of Elders as Resources programs.

Benefits to Educators

Educators will find a number of personal and professional benefits in Elders as Resources programs.

Providing dynamic learning activities. Teachers constantly are challenged to develop educational activities that provide accurate information and make learning meaningful and stimulating. Teachers will gain from the presence of older persons working with students on projects exploring history, culture and ideas from different generational points of view.

Incorporating aging awareness without adding to the curriculum. Teachers do not have to make changes in their curriculums. They may bring older persons into the classroom in different ways and at different levels to enlighten subjects they already teach. Without adding extra units or topics, teachers can incorporate aging education as a secondary outcome, while still meeting course goals.

Classroom assistance. Teachers will find that elders in the classroom are valuable teaching assistants. Teachers will benefit from the maturity and experience elders bring to students both as partners and mentors.

Aging awareness among educators. Teachers are not exempt from prejudices toward older people and from fears of their own aging. As in other workplaces, schools will be staffed by progressively older teachers. Elders as Resources programs allow teachers to consider their own attitudes about aging and about older people.

Promoting the school in the community. Educators should be more responsive to the larger community, including localities where an increasing proportion of residents have no school-age children. Elders as Resources programs promote the school in the community by linking individuals from organizations such as senior centers, senior housing and adult day-care facilities. Other community organizations, such as local libraries, museums and historical societies, can be included. The result is a greater sense of community within the school, and vice versa.

PROGRAM IDEAS

Elders as Resources programs are designed to be coordinated with existing school programs, such as social studies, language arts, health and home economics. The following are suggested program models for different disciplines. Teachers are not limited either to these particular ideas or to the subject areas they represent. Teachers and students may adopt or modify any of these models, or choose programs in other subject areas. Teachers should tailor programs to meet the needs of a specific site, classroom or group.

Elders as Presenters

The most basic kind of interactive intergenerational program involves sharing memories, knowledge or expertise on a particular subject. Such programs either are integrated into a given classroom topic or presented as a special event or series.

One popular discussion format is a *living history* program on selected historical and societal issues. Older adults share personal experiences and knowledge on such topics as local history and the effects of national events on their work and family lives. Students listen to firsthand accounts of older persons and respond with questions and comments. Suggested activities include the following.

- Invite persons with vivid memories of a given period to share their recollections in the classroom.
- Assign a class reading on a topic such as the Depression. Give the reading assignment to the older participants as well, so that they might compare the written record and their personal encounter with historical events.
- Ask a guest presenter to discuss what it meant to live through such a historical period and experience such difficult times.
- Encourage questions and discussion among students.
- Invite students and presenters to describe their personal reactions and insights on the activities.

Example: The Rochambeau Middle School draws from its large older population in Southbury, Connecticut. The gifted and talented program developed a list of local older specialists who make classroom presentations or serve as mentors on various subjects. Teachers use the list to identify resource persons for students with special interests.

Oral History Project

Oral histories, or tape-recorded life stories, offer valuable insights. They show diverse personal and historical memories of the same events. An oral history interview is unique because the person being interviewed shares personal information. Young interviewers gain significantly in this personal and interactive process. Suggested activities include the following.

- Introduce and teach students interview techniques for an oral history (see Appendix B, Facilitating Intergenerational Discussions).
- Ask each student to select a subject. Each subject should be broad enough to encourage interviewees to tell their stories, but narrow enough to focus on themes relevant to the class project.
- Assign students to identify older men and women to be interviewed.
- Ask students to conduct tape-recorded interviews. Stories are recorded, not only to provide valuable factual information, but also to document unique points of view.

- Use interviews as documents for a history paper or other project. The tapes and project materials also may be donated as historical documents to the collections of local historical societies, museums or libraries.

Example: At Ridgefield (Conn.) High School, the subject of aging is incorporated in the American studies curriculum in various ways. In one project activity, students write a biographical research paper. Student techniques for conducting oral history interviews are structured around questions devised by social studies and library media teachers. Students then identify older persons and ask them about their lives, careers and adjustments in earlier and later life.

Community History Project

On a more ambitious level, teachers, students and elders could work together on an intergenerational historical research project in the community. A focus might be on the history of selected neighborhoods, ethnic or religious groups, or historic sites. Classes might write a history of their own school, or trace the community over several generations.

This kind of project generates an understanding of history from the point of view of everyday people, their families and communities. It promotes mutual respect and understanding among young and old students as they conduct research together. Just as important, it strengthens ties between school and community. Suggested activities include the following.

- Familiarize young and old participants with resources offered by local libraries, the historical society, museums, the town hall, and archival resources such as back issues of local newspapers and city directories (see Appendix D for additional resources for conducting community history projects).
- In pairs or small research groups, have young and old participants investigate different historical documents that describe community life. Examples include local occupations, schools, transportation or entertainment.
- Conduct oral history interviews with people in the community (see Oral History Project suggestions on page 4).
- Assign a term paper, an exhibit or a public presentation. An exhibit might include the words of people who were interviewed, with photographs, scenes of the neighborhoods in which they lived, and documents that represent their experiences. The final product might be developed into a slide program or video.

Example: Students in social studies classes at Rockville (Conn.) High School documented the history of the school. Students did preliminary research in the library archives and in town newspapers, and interviewed community residents who attended the school.

Multicultural and Age Awareness

Multicultural awareness has become increasingly significant. Older people can assist in classroom projects designed to explore this country's great diversity of people and lifestyles. They may help students to realize that community elders often are the caretakers of cultural wisdom, practices and artifacts that have made our country a rainbow of cultures (see Appendix D for resources that are useful in developing multicultural programs). Suggested activities include the following.

- Invite older members of ethnic groups to share their knowledge, life experiences, customs and artifacts with students in classrooms.

- Team students with elders to explore ethnic traditions in the community.
- Select a committee of students and older adults to prepare an exhibit on ethnic culture. Organize an ethnic fair or festival at school. Invite community members to participate.
- Ask students to document local customs through photography and video.
- Organize an intergenerational demonstration of ethnic song, dance, craft and art.
- Select elders to teach their craft to students. Students both report on the process and display their own products with those of participating elders.

Example: Mattatuck Museum, the Naugatuck Valley Project and Stone Soup, a nonprofit organization, cosponsored the annual Waterbury (Conn.) Ethnic Music Festival. Younger and older community members representing the city's ethnic diversity share music, food and experiences. The Mattatuck Museum worked with the Waterbury public school system to bring several festival participants into classrooms to share their cultural talents. These have included an older Russian couple who performed traditional songs in costume and related them to events in their lives; a traditional Irish singer in his late 60s; Puerto Rican musicians who taught Latin percussion techniques and musical concepts; and a Portuguese woman who shared the songs of her native land.

Intergenerational Discussion Groups

One effective way of developing communication skills and broadening aging awareness is to bring elders and students together to share perspectives in a discussion of common themes and issues. Without necessarily discussing aging, young and old persons can learn to appreciate differing points of view that are influenced by age, historical experience, culture and other sources of a person's identity.

Successful programs have been conducted where young and old persons participate in a series of discussions based on various readings. In addition to readings, a teacher might show a film and then lead a discussion. One approach to literature is to treat films as readings that encourage young or old readers to explore issues narrated by great writers. A discussion group may help young and old participants to understand alternative points of view. This teaching strategy may help to overcome possible reservations about reading. Suggested activities include the following.

- Assign an intergenerational group to discuss selected short stories by different authors on the same theme and to compare and contrast the authors' treatment of the subject.
- Organize programs on health and aging issues by featuring fiction, poetry, essays and films that examine what it means to grow old. Appropriate themes include intergenerational relationships, traditional and newly created family roles, and physical and mental health concerns of older adults. Readings that depict older men and women facing life's challenges as they live and interact with family members, friends and people in their community should be selected.
- Organize a film discussion program around the American Short Story series. This series contains approximately 20 well-produced dramatizations of short stories by North American authors. It was broadcast on public television in recent years and is available from PBS. This series is appropriate for thematic programs, where several films can be organized on a general theme. Examples are *The Life Cycle*, where each dramatized short story depicts a central character at a different life stage; and *Vice and Virtue*, in which each film presents a particular moral or

ethical issue. Paperback anthologies containing the stories in this series are readily available.

- Have students investigate current events such as natural disasters, storms or fires. Here, older adults comment on the news articles of their day and how society regarded the events and dealt with the aftermath. Students gain by doing research, establishing parallels and directing interviews.

Example: Conard High School, in West Hartford, Connecticut, sponsored a student-moderated intergenerational discussion group at the West Hartford Senior Center. An initial topic for group discussion involved the respective images that young and old people have of each other. Other subjects for discussion, selected alternately by elders and students, have included environmental issues, abortion, state government and taxes, the impact of budget cuts on education, interschool rivalry, student conduct, and police-student relations.

Life Writing

Another vehicle for intergenerational learning is the written word – the exchange of personal thoughts committed to paper and shared across generations. Life writing is an opportunity for younger and older people to share life views and experiences through writing exercises. Suggested activities include the following.

- The teacher focuses on a life event or theme, such as family relations, childhood or personal values. Variations on this project involve several forms of literary expression, such as poetry, short dramatic works and keeping a journal.
- Include older adults in classroom writing exercises. Assign both older adults and young students to compose a short paper describing something about their own lives.
- Elders and students present their completed assignments in class. In an open discussion format, students compare perspectives of elders and themselves. Understanding the ways in which their views are similar or different, especially relating to life themes or events, is sure to generate enthusiasm.

Example: Students from a writing class at Windsor (Conn.) High School visit an adult day care facility. Students interview elders and transcribe their interviews on word processors at school. They then write a journal-type article, based on the words of the people interviewed. Students present essays to the elders who were interviewed during a special day of celebration.

Food and Culture

Among the most common, yet important, of all family traditions is preparing food. Food preparation is an art. Each culture and region has unique kinds of foods and ways of preparation. People from different cultures and regions differ in the role that food plays in their lives. By having elders instruct students in the art of food preparation from their culture or region, the class becomes a forum for both aging awareness and multicultural education. Suggested activities include the following.

- Elders attend class and share samples of ethnic food from family recipes passed down through the generations. Students are invited to share their own family food traditions.
- An ethnic festival is organized and food is displayed and consumed by festival participants. Elders describe the foods and food preparation in specific ethnic celebrations.
- Social and cultural circumstances often lead groups to develop diets that are distinct from others. With the assistance of elders, students may record recipes and stories for a shared publication.

Example: Canton (Conn.) High School's "Link" program sponsors a variety of intergenerational projects throughout the school year. Many of the projects involve home economics activities. Local elders are invited to school for meals prepared by school staff members and students. These residents share family recipes and food preparation traditions. Ethnic foods and their significance are subjects of formal and informal educational exchanges between students and elders.

APPENDIX A

Planning Intergenerational Programs

Successful intergenerational programs require considerable thought and planning. Attention to objectives, logistics, group composition and group process is necessary. Organizers of intergenerational programs will increase the success of these activities when the following suggestions are considered.

Clearly define educational objectives. Intergenerational activities should support curricular goals. "Getting the generations together" is not a sufficient reason for schools to promote intergenerational activities. There must be purposeful interaction that addresses specific learning objectives. When intergenerational programs do not have clear educational goals, young students and older adults are less likely to know what is expected of them. If an intergenerational program is not perceived as being purposeful by all participants, younger and older persons may question the experience. All participants need to know the purpose, process and timing of activities.

Present a balanced view of older adults. Portraying older people as wise sages living in a glamorous, romanticized period is as much a disservice as emphasizing the negative stereotypes of older adults as being poor, frail and helpless. Teachers should allow as much exposure as possible to a variety of older people. If intergenerational exposure must be limited, programs that use advantaged groups of older adults are preferable, because they serve as models for successful aging. Active and alert older adults also are more representative of the over-60 population. Successful programs with frail or disabled persons can be accomplished with proper attention to details, and emphasis on the positive – even in difficult circumstances.

Consider the needs of students and older adults. In addition to educational objectives, educators must consider the special abilities and interests of both younger and older participants. This will influence the length of time and kinds of activities that will hold both of their interest levels. The more successful intergenerational programs match the needs of both age groups. For example, one teacher prepared students to interview older men who played pool at the local senior center. Unfortunately, these men were not interested in sharing their life stories at a time that interfered with their pool games. By recognizing these needs, the organizer could have arranged for a different older group or a different time and place. The older pool players may have been more appropriately matched with a group of geometry students who wanted to figure out the best angles of different shots. Or they could have talked with social studies students about how and when they learned pool and what other games they played. To balance the experience, young students could have introduced their video games to the older persons. With some modifications, programs can be designed to meet the needs of both students and elders.

Review effective communication skills with students. Acquaint students with listening and speaking skills that are helpful in communicating with older adults who may experience a hearing or vision loss. However, health problems associated with age should not be over emphasized. This would only reinforce students' fears and negative attitudes about aging. Brief explanations of hearing and vision changes are appropriate. Practical communication suggestions include facing the person when listening or speaking, not speaking too fast or too slowly, clearly enunciating words, speaking in

complete sentences with the use of appropriate hand gestures and, if necessary, repeating information through the use of different words. Emphasize that these are good communication skills to use with people of all ages.

Choose the setting carefully. When choosing a location for intergenerational activities, consider such aspects as location, size of room, restrooms, accessibility for disabled persons, distracting noises or activity, ventilation, chairs and general aesthetics. An uncomfortable setting can ruin the best programs.

Allow sufficient time for opening and closing intergenerational activities. Intimate, meaningful interaction is possible only after participants have overcome initial skepticism and insecurity about the group. Intergenerational organizers can provide the structure for opening activities that introduce persons and set a positive tone. Children along the age continuum react differently to older people whom they may not know.

Effective group development also includes attention to separation or termination. Time should be allowed for participants to consolidate learning and to emphasize positive aspects of intergenerational experiences. Students and elders can express what they liked or did not like. In some cases, they may have questions that need to be addressed. Organizers may want to allow for future informal exchanges if students or elders express interest in continuing communication in person or through correspondence.

APPENDIX B

Facilitating Intergenerational Discussions

The following suggestions are offered as guidelines for facilitating discussion programs that include older adults. Detailed guidance is available in Deren, et al (1985).

Older persons may or may not have characteristics commonly associated with old age. Their interests and capabilities vary more than those for any other age groups. Do not assume that older participants will behave in predictable ways or hold uniform views.

Challenge group members to think critically. Young students may lack experience in critical thinking. Elders may have been taught to accept, rather than challenge, ideas from "experts." Participants will learn from a discussion that allows them to question, examine and analyze issues.

Experience is the older adult's counterpart to formal schooling. Some older adults who participate in school programs may have little formal education. Their experience provides lively examples of the issues and events students are studying.

Keep the discussion on the subject. While challenging participants to go beyond a superficial view of a subject, encourage participants to share their reactions to materials and to take stands on the issues.

Present different viewpoints and perspectives. Encourage participants to examine the author's point of view and other related information. For example, when discussing a short story, ask why the author chose specific characters or described characters in a certain way. What was the author's intent and what was the impact on the reader?

Draw general or universal themes from personal responses. The most common reaction to a discussion is a personal response. For older adults, the discussion provides a setting for life review, a process of evaluating, understanding and accepting one's past. If the discussion digresses too much into personal reminiscences, the teacher, as facilitator, can paraphrase key points and gently guide the discussion back to the subject at hand.

Acknowledge any intense emotional responses. Open exchanges are positive and reflect a genuine interest in the issues. The facilitator can draw others into the discussion to relieve tension and stimulate group acceptance and understanding.

Be sensitive to special needs of young or old group members. This includes enunciating clearly for the hearing impaired and avoiding visual aids for the visually impaired.

Adapt materials and methods to the group's abilities. Individuals may lack reading skills or be visually impaired. The discussion facilitator may choose to read aloud portions of the text before initiating a discussion. Having literate group members read excerpts aloud during a discussion is an effective teaching strategy for groups ranging from informal gatherings to college seminars. This approach reinforces the readings by drawing attention to the material. It also provides a review for those who have forgotten or missed the reading.

APPENDIX C
Oral History Interviewing

This brief outline is intended to provide guidance for people preparing oral history interviews. For additional information consult Sitton, et al (1983).

Preparation

Several preliminary steps are essential before one conducts the interview.

Define the purpose of the interview. Determine the focus and subject of your interview. That focus may be an individual, a family, an event or a topic, e.g., the history of a neighborhood, community, workplace, ethnic or religious group. List specific topics you wish to discuss. This list will guide your interview.

Collect background information. If you wish to record the life story of an individual, talk first with friends and family members of the individual in order to get an idea of important life events. Your interview subject may not always mention significant incidents. Include background research from books and newspapers – enough to generate a list of the kinds of questions you will need to ask about the topic.

Obtain recording equipment. Learn to use it before you go to your interview. A good audiocassette recorder is acceptable. A separate microphone is better, since built-in microphones pick up machine noise. Select a good-quality tape, 60 to 90 minutes in length (30-45 minutes per side) – definitely not longer.

Arrange a pre-interview visit. Get acquainted with the subject of your interview before you bring your tape recorder. This is especially important if you do not already know your subject. During this short visit, you can locate the best place to have the interview (near an electrical outlet, if you need one, and away from outside sources of noise, such as appliances, televisions, telephones or nearby roads).

Prepare open-ended questions. Anticipate that you should talk less than 20 percent of the time. You want interesting stories, not just answers to questions (see pages 15 and 16 for sample interview questions).

Interview Strategies

The following suggestions will improve the quality of the interview.

Encourage the interviewee to answer freely. Provide adequate time for responses. This sets a conversational tone for the interview. Allow for changes in the order of information or events. Fill in gaps as the interview progresses and organize the information later. The important thing is to put the interviewee at ease.

Use conversational style. Talk *with* rather than *down to* the interviewee. Adopt an interview style that is natural, using clear, precise language.

Do not interrupt. Do not be concerned with following a set, preconceived order of topics. Your interviewee may introduce a topic that you had not planned to discuss. If she or he skips a subject you want to explore further, remind yourself to return to it later in the interview. Write short notes during the interview to track topics and ideas.

Encourage the interviewee to offer more detailed information. For example, if the person you are interviewing finishes describing the kind of work he or she had done, follow up with a question such as: What were the conditions like in the workplace? How did co-workers get along with each other? What changes took place in the workplace during the time that you worked there?

Avoid giving your own opinions. You are not the interviewee. Be encouraging, courteous and noncommittal. Find a balance between formal and informal conversational styles. Never argue.

The interview should last from one to two hours. It may be shorter or longer, depending on your energy level and that of the person you are interviewing. Arrange a second appointment to address topics missed in the first interview, to clarify points covered previously, and to explore new topics generated by the first interview.

Release Form

Release forms assure that the interviewee understands the purpose of the interview and grants permission to use it.

Ask the person you interview to sign a release form. The form is a simple statement to clarify the fact that she or he is willing to allow you to use the contents of the interview for purposes such as public presentation, publication or a class report. Below is a sample release form:

Release Form

I give the tape recordings, the contents of this interview and any future transcripts made from them to _____ as a donation for whatever scholarly or educational purposes may be determined.

_____ _____

Signature of Interviewee Signature of Interviewer

_____ _____

Interviewee Name (print) Interviewer Name (print)

_____

Street Address

_____

City State Zip Code

Restrictions:

(Sample restriction: A person may not want his or her real name used. In such a case, indicate under "Restrictions" that a pseudonym must be used.)

Interview Questions

The following sample interview questions are organized around specific themes. Do not feel compelled to complete your list of questions during the interview. Rather, use your own list of questions as guidelines for stimulating discussion.

Personal background

When and where were you born?
Why did your family settle there?
Did they come from another state; another country?
Do you remember any stories your family told you about how they arrived? Did they move around a lot before you were born, or as you were growing up?
Tell me about your grandparents.
How do you feel the time and place that you were born shaped your life?
What were some of your early experiences as a child growing up in the old country (small town, the farm, or in a large city)?
What kinds of games or sports did you play?
What kinds of toys did you play with?
Who were your childhood heroes?
What were your favorite songs and music?
What slang expressions did you use?
What schools did you go to?
What was school like for you?
Which teachers left a special impression on you? Why?
Did your parents have expectations about your education and future career?
How did you get your first job?
What kinds of jobs have you had?
What was or is your main trade, skill or profession?

Family history

Tell me something about your family background.
What cultural, ethnic or religious traditions are you a part of?
Do you remember any stories about family members, about the origins of your family and the family name?
What family customs do you recall?
Did family members celebrate certain holidays and prepare favorite foods?
Were any family members singers, musicians, artists or craftspeople?
In what ways have family traditions changed over the years?

Community history

What was community life like on the farm or in the town or city where you were born or raised?
Were there any community traditions, such as annual celebrations, festivals, parades, fairs, church or synagogue events?
What do you remember of the people in your neighborhood?
How has it changed over the years?
What do you think brought about those changes?
What were the main trades or occupations in your community?
Have any of those jobs changed or new ones been created?

(continued)

Social history

How old were you during the Depression (World Wars I or II, or during the "Cold War")?

How were you, your family and your friends affected by these major events?

What did you do during these times?

How did those experiences affect you later in life?

Describe some of the technological changes that have taken place during your lifetime.

What kinds of changes took place in the nature of the work you did for a living?

What kinds of relationships did you have with the people you worked with, with your supervisor or boss, with customers or clients?

APPENDIX D
Resources

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Connecticut Department on Aging. *Celebrating Life*. Hartford, CT: Connecticut Department on Aging, 1991. (May be ordered from the Connecticut Department on Aging, 175 Main Street, Hartford, CT 06106.)

Deren, Jane; Manheimer, Ronald J.; and Liroff, Sylvia Riggs. *Portraits and Pathways: Exploring Stories of Aging* (*Self-Discovery through the Humanities* series). Washington, DC: The National Council on Aging, 1988.

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Polisar, Donna; Wygant, Larry; Cole, Thomas; and Perdomo, Cielo. *Where Do We Come From? What Are We? Where Are We Going?* Washington, DC: Gerontological Society of America, 1988.

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Stare, Bruce M., and Sutherland, John F. *Talking about Connecticut: Oral History in the Nutmeg State*. Middletown, CT: Connecticut Humanities Council, 1990.

Weitzman, David. *My Backyard History Book*. Boston: Little, Brown & Company, 1975.

APPENDIX E
The Aging Network

National Organizations

American Association of Retired Persons (AARP)
601 E Street NW
Washington, DC 20049
(202) 434-6070

American Society on Aging (ASA)
833 Market Street, Suite 516
San Francisco, CA 94103
(415) 543-2617

The Gerontological Society of America (GSA)
1275 K Street, NW, Suite 350
Washington, DC 20005-4006
(202) 842-1275

Retired Senior Volunteers Program (RSVP)
ACTION
806 Connecticut Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20525
1-800-424-2284

The National Council on the Aging (NCOA)
600 Maryland Avenue, SW
West Wing 100
Washington, DC 20024
(203) 479-1200

Intergenerational Program Resources

Exchange Newsletter
Generations Together
Suite 300; 121 University Place
University of Pittsburgh
Pittsburgh, PA 15260
(412) 648-7150

Directory of Intergenerational Programming
Center on Rural Elderly
University of Missouri at Kansas City
5245 Rockhill Road
Kansas City, MO 64110
(816) 235-2180

Interages News
Montgomery County Intergenerational Resource Center
9411 Connecticut Avenue
Kensington, MD 20895
(301) 949-3551

Interchange
Center for Intergenerational Learning
Institute on Aging
Temple University
1601 N. Broad Street
Philadelphia, PA 19122
(215) 787-6970

Intergenerational Clearinghouse Newsletter
RSVP of Dane County Inc.
517 N. Segoe Road, Suite 210
Madison, WI 53705
(608) 238-7787

Lifespan Resources, Inc.
1212 Roosevelt
Ann Arbor, MI 48104
(313) 994-4715

Linkages
Center for Understanding Aging
Framingham State College
Framingham, MA 01701
(505) 626-4979

Newsline Newsletter
Generations United
440 First Street NW, Suite 310
Washington, DC 20001-2001
(202) 638-2952

Connecticut State Organizations

Connecticut State Department on Aging
175 Main Street
Hartford, CT 06106
1-800-443-9946

Alzheimer's Coalition of Connecticut, Inc.
175 Main Street
Hartford, CT 06106
566-7772

Area Agencies on Aging

Southwestern Area Agency on Aging
2414 Main Street
Bridgeport, CT 06606
333-9288

North Central Area Agency on Aging
999 Asylum Avenue
Hartford, CT 06105
278-2044

Eastern Connecticut Area Agency on Aging
401 West Thames Street
Norwich, CT 06360
887-3561

Western Connecticut Area Agency on Aging
20 East Main Street
Waterbury, CT 06702
757-5449

South Central Area Agency on Aging
201 Noble Street
West Haven, CT 06516
933-5431

Connecticut Retired Senior Volunteer Programs (RSVP)

RSVP of Northern New London County
90 Town Street
Norwich, CT 06360
889-2648

RSVP of Southern New London County
302 Captain's Walk
New London, CT 06320
422-8396

Greater Norwalk RSVP
98 South Main Street
Norwalk, CT 06854
854-1880

RSVP of Eastern Fairfield County
263 Golden Hill Street
Bridgeport, CT 06604
576-8048

New Britain Area RSVP
50 High Street
New Britain, CT 06051
224-7117

RSVP of North Fairfield County
2 Terrace Place
Danbury, CT 06810
792-8200

Greater Bristol RSVP
98 Summer Street
Bristol, CT 06010
584-2725

Greater Hartford RSVP
99 Woodland Street
Hartford, CT 06105
274-4293

RSVP of Waterbury
232 North Elm Street
Waterbury, CT 06702
575-9799

RSVP of Greater New Haven
201 Noble Street
West Haven, CT 06516
933-5431

United Services RSVP
Wolf Den Road
Post Office Box 168
Brooklyn, CT 06234
774-9486

Midstate RSVP
97 Broad Street
Middletown, CT 06457
347-0236

EPILOGUE
Why Teach About Aging?

By FRAN PRATT, DIRECTOR
Center For Understanding Aging
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Children learn about aging whether we teach them or not. The issue is not whether they learn, but rather what they learn about the lifelong process of growing up and growing older. If left to happenstance, children learn about aging in the same ways they learn about so many things – simply by absorbing whatever they hear or see, often without being able to distinguish between fact and fiction. We might call this learning by osmosis. All too often, what children learn about aging by osmosis is based on myths about the aging process and on stereotypes of older people that are deeply entrenched in our culture. These myths and stereotypes are transmitted from one generation to another in our language, humor and literature, and through all the media by which we perpetuate the knowledge, values and attitudes of our society.

Not everything that children learn about aging is negative. As with adults from whom they learn, children's attitudes about aging are complex and ambivalent, reflecting the mixed feelings of society as a whole. Yet research shows that, even at a very early age, children may already have internalized ideas that can serve as a breeding ground for ageism (age prejudice) and gerontophobia (fear of aging).

Similarly, not everything children learn about the process of aging is false. Yet, again, research demonstrates that what children know about the process of growing up and growing older is a mixture of truth and misinformation. Like many adults from whom they learn, their perspective on life in the later years (and of their own future as people who will someday grow old) is often dominated by a view of aging as a process of decline, rather than one of growth and fulfillment. A child's view of what it means to grow old frequently emphasizes physical and mental handicaps, loneliness and isolation, institutionalization and dependency. What is missing is the vision of life at all ages as characterized by wellness of body and mind, involvement with others, and independent lives connected to the community at large. In other words, children fully understand the problems that often accompany old age. What they do not understand is the great potential for happiness and wellness throughout long life when people exercise good habits of mental and physical health, and when they live in a society that provides opportunities for them in later years to remain active participants in the mainstream of life.

Children today are expected to live longer than any previous generation and, barring unforeseen circumstances, to live out their long lives in a progressively aging society. Since the beginning of the century, average life expectancy at birth has steadily climbed from 47 to 74 years, which means that half the children born in the 1980s should live to their mid-70s, even if no new breakthroughs in medical technology and health care develop to extend their lives further.

When today's elementary school children become tomorrow's senior citizens, they will be among those one out of four Americans who already have passed their 60th birthday. This "longevity revolution" of the 20th century brings vast implications for all aspects of life. Greater longevity and changes in the age composition of the population have had, and will continue to have, an enormous impact on the family, careers and retirement, education, medicine, business, government and the distribution of public resources. All living Americans, and especially the young, will live out the rest of their

lives facing new challenges on age-related issues that will require intelligent decisions based on knowledge and comprehension, not on myth and misinformation.

For all these reasons children need to learn about aging. It is better to prevent than to cure, easier to learn than "un-learn." Children should begin at the earliest possible age to develop a healthy and realistic view of aging, to understand that they can maximize their own opportunities for quality of life, and to develop understanding of the complex issues of living in an aging world. None of us, and least of all young people, can afford to face our individual or collective future(s) guided by ageist myths and stereotypes or by patterns of age discrimination and gerontophobic behavior. If preparation for the future was ever a goal of education, then education about aging should clearly be a high priority for all who play a role in educating and socializing the young.

Connecticut State Department on Aging

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